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NEW GREEK AND ROMAN AC- QUISITIONS

II. BRONZES



FIG. I
ARCHAIC FEMALE
FIGURE

IN the last number of the Bulletin reference was made to the acquisition of seventeen bronzes as part of the large consignment of Greek and Roman antiquities which the Museum has received. As each one of these forms in itself an important addition to the Museum collection of ancient bronzes a short account of them is necessary. Of the seventeen pieces only four are, properly speaking, statuettes; but the four figures used as mirror-supports may also be classed under that category.

The rest are specimens of decorative work, with four exceptions—a sword, greave, *strigil* and *hydria*. The Greeks, as has been appropriately said, “touched nothing which they did not adorn.” Their artistic energy did not confine itself to producing statues and paintings, but their utensils and articles of common use are often of such exquisite shape and work-

manship that they rank as works of art. Thus, among the ancient bronzes which have been discovered, a great part served by way of ornament to the most varied objects, such as furniture, vases, mirrors and so forth.

In the statuettes and the decorative reliefs the same development of style and technique can be traced as in contemporary works of sculpture. The earliest among the new statuettes is the girl holding a lotos-bud (*cf.* fig. 1). A hole at the top of her head seems to indicate that this figure once served as a mirror-handle. It belongs to the sixth century B. C., and shows the stiff, archaic treatment prevalent at that time. The figure stands in a rigid attitude, the only variety in the pose being in the action of the arms, which are no longer tightly attached to the sides as in the most primitive figures. The modeling of the body is flat and the rendering of the face betrays the inexperienced hand of the artist who had not yet solved the difficulties presented by the fashioning of the human eye and mouth.

The figure of a youth carrying a pig on his shoulders, and three mirror-supports, of which one is a bearded man, all belong to the succeeding period (520–450 B. C.), when the initial problems of sculptural rendering have, for the most part, been successfully solved and only a lingering stiffness in attitude remains to show that full freedom and naturalness have not yet been attained. Of these four, the youth with a pig (*cf.* fig. 2), found at Sirolo, near Ancona, is the earliest. Though the attitude is natural and the modeling of the body very true to life, the rendering of the face and hair still shows signs of archaism; the disproport-



FIG. 2
YOUTH CARRYING
A PIG

tionate length of the legs from the knees downward should also be noticed.

The female figure supporting a mirror (*cf.* fig. 3), is an excellent example of the period which immediately preceded the bloom of Greek art. The attitude with the raised right hand and the left holding up a fold of the garment is still the conventional pose of earlier works; but the modeling of the arms and neck and the rendering of the face, hair and drapery, already show

great freedom. Moreover, her garment is not the elaborate Ionic chiton worn by earlier figures, for instance the archaic maidens of the Acropolis Museum, but the Doric peplos, hanging in simple, straight folds.

A still further advance is noticeable in the charming figure of a girl, from Macedonia (*cf.* fig. 5). Her attitude, with both arms raised to support the mirror disk and the right knee slightly bent, is one of absolute ease, and true regard is paid to the texture of the drapery which is no longer made to hide entirely the contours of the body beneath it.

The bronze bull from Dodona also belongs to the late archaic period (520-460 B. C.), and is an excellent example of the life-like treatment of animals during that epoch.

Bronze statuettes of the second half of the fifth century are comparatively rare and none of the recent accessions can be assigned to that period. To the fourth century B. C. belong probably two Greek mirrors, found in Greece, which illustrate the shape used at that time. The form consisting of a circular disk with a support in the form of a human figure had

by this time gone out of fashion and been supplanted by a new variety in which the polished disk has, instead of a support, a cover, the top of which is adorned with a relief. The reliefs on one of our two examples represent Eros, the other a female head in profile.

The school of Lysippos is represented by a statuette of Poseidon (or Zeus?) (*cf.* fig. 4). At least it is to that period that one is inclined to ascribe this figure,



FIG. 3
MIRROR

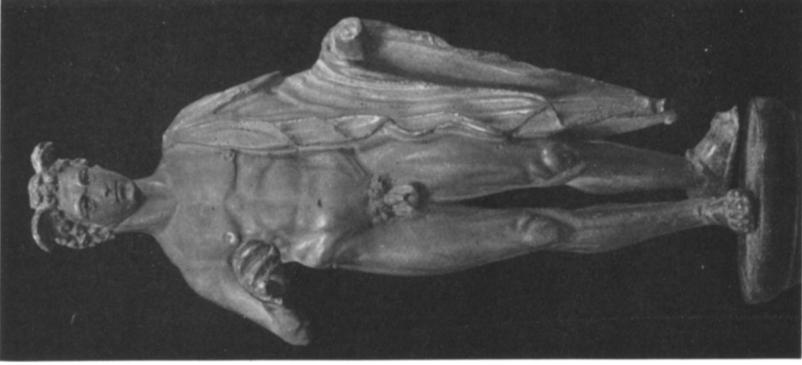


FIG. 6
HERMES

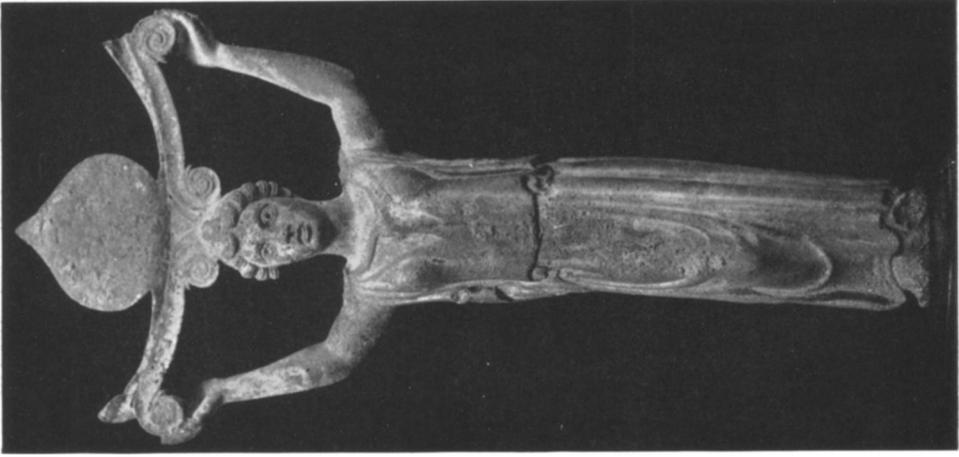


FIG. 5
MIRROR SUPPORT

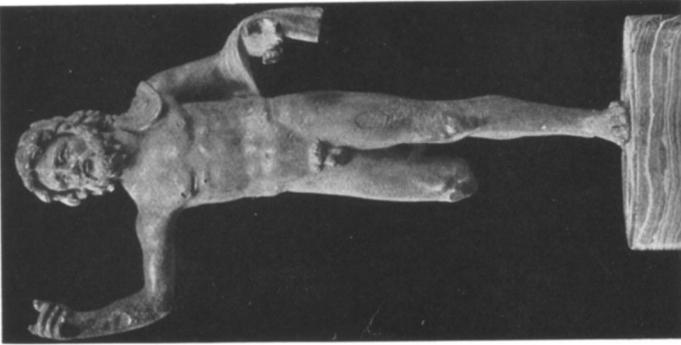


FIG. 4
POSEIDON

which in its proportions illustrates the canon introduced by Lysippos, the chief features of which were a diminished squareness of body and a lengthening of the legs. A figure similar to this is in the British Museum (*cf.* Walters's *Catalogue of Bronzes No. 274*). The attributes are now lost, but it is probable that the right hand held a trident and the left a *phiale* or dolphin.

The two beautiful reliefs representing satyrs' heads (for one *cf.* figure 7), which once may have ornamented the centres of bowls, belong to the Hellenistic period (third or second century B. C.), the marvellous realism of their faces and the minute rendering of every detail are characteristic of that age.

Following closely upon the Hellenistic epoch came the spread of Roman sovereignty and the decline of artistic originality. But though the development of art stopped, artistic activity did not, and throughout the Empire we find local schools producing works which are clearly derived from earlier models, but often

slightly varied to suit the taste of a later time. The statuette of Hermes (*cf.* fig. 6) characterized as the swift messenger of the gods by the small wings on his head, is a Gallo-Roman bronze of the imperial period. It is of careful workmanship, but the hardness of the modeling is very apparent when we compare it with the other Greek bronzes.

The Greeks used bronze much more extensively than do we. The bronze greave and sword illustrate their fondness for it as a material for armor. The *hydria* (water-jug) is a superb example of its use for vessels, as is also the large archaic vase-handle. Very interesting is a bronze *strigil* or instrument used by athletes for scraping themselves; it is said to have come from Elis and is inscribed with the name of the owner, Agemachos, the late form of the *e* and *m* indicating that it cannot be earlier than about the third century B. C., and probably later. A beautiful bluish-green patina now covers it.

G. M. A. R.



FIG. 7
SATYR'S HEAD